

**Missouri Department of Social Services – Children’s Division**



**Policy and Procedures Handbook**  
**Of the**  
**Missouri State Youth Advisory Board**

***"We are the Voice of those who count - The Youth in Foster Care of Missouri"***

**Developed by: 1997-1998 Missouri State Youth Advisory Board**

**Latest Revision: August 2009**

## **Introduction**

The Missouri State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) was established December 1992, with the first meeting being held on June 25, 1993. The SYAB meets on a regular basis, at least quarterly. Each member of the board is an outstanding youth in foster care that represents other youth in his/her area of the state. Each Chafee Contracted Agency nominates at least three youth to serve on the State Youth Advisory Board. This will assure that SYAB members are equally representing their specific areas as related to geographical size. TLP Youth and Native American Youth are encouraged to participate as well. Recognizing that each SYAB member represents all children and youth who have been or are in Out-of-Home placements, each SYAB member is responsible for providing Children's Services policy and procedural input to CD administrative staff and Juvenile Court. The SYAB decides what goals and activities they want to pursue for upcoming meetings and carry those out accordingly. The SYAB also works as a network by bringing back important information to the Area Youth Advisory Board (AYAB) and other youth in their region. When recommended to serve on the SYAB, the membership term is one (1) year, however, once a member there are guidelines to follow in order to continue membership.

## **SYAB Mission Statement**

The mission of the SYAB is to empower Out-of-Home youth to provide input into the policies and procedures for Out-of-Home Care; to provide meaningful leadership training and experiences for board members; and to empower board members who, in turn, can empower children and youth who have experienced Out-of-Home Care.

## Recruitment, Requirements, Orientation of Membership

### Recruitment

- Interested youth shall submit an application to their Chafee or TLP provider.
- The youth must be nominated by their local AYAB, if one is in place, and/or Chafee provider/TLP provider.
- The applicant must bring their application packet to the SYAB meeting. The application packet consists of the application plus two reference letters, one letter from their Chafee or TLP Provider and preferably one from someone who works with the youth such as a case manager, juvenile officer, or Guardian-Ad-Litem. A community member's reference letter is acceptable as well.
- SYAB members interview applicant.

#### SYAB Interview Process:

- SYAB members review application and Chair and Co-Chair discuss potential member's application with all SYAB members.
- Chair and Co-Chair alternate leading interview of applicant with the following questions:
  1. How committed are you willing to be?
  2. Are there any activities that would probably keep you from being committed?
  3. What strengths do you feel you can contribute to the board?
  4. What do you believe your weaknesses are? How will you develop those into strengths?
  5. What skills do you think a good leader possess?
  6. Does the applicant have any special concerns or questions?
  7. Does the SYAB have any special concerns or questions for the applicant?
- Chair asks potential member to leave the room and calls a vote on membership. Voting remains confidential in terms of how many for and against votes were received and who voted for whom.

## Requirements

- At least three youth from each region should be nominated to become a regional delegate to the State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB).
- The youth must be participating in the avenue that their region has in place for youth to communicate their thoughts and feeling on issues that are important to them. This may be in the form of an AYAB or other youth board.
- The youth must be age 16-21, but if turns 21 during the term, or leaves Children's Division custody, can finish the remainder of the term if they left in good standing.
- The youth must be an active participant of a Chafee or TLP program.
- The youth must have a good attendance record for activities in which they are involved, such as Chafee and TLP activities, AYAB meetings, school, work, etc.
- The youth must be performing adequately in school (according to case manager and foster parents or guardian).
- The youth must be willing to contact other youth in Missouri when necessary to get information and input on policy and programs.
- The youth must be willing to speak on behalf of youth in out of home placement.
- The youth must be willing to represent the SYAB at activities.

## Orientation

- This handbook will be given to potential SYAB members at the first meeting.
- The first meeting is the time when potential members have the opportunity to learn about the SYAB and current SYAB members have the opportunity to learn about potential candidates.
- At the first meeting, time will be allotted for the co-scribe to answer any questions and go over the handbook with the new member. This time can be used to further explain the purpose and responsibilities of an SYAB member, if necessary.

## **Member Expectations**

- To be open-minded.
- To energetically participate in board activities by being active, fun, creative, dependable and motivated.
- To work hard and to reach goals.
- To be a positive role model for other youth.
- To be willing to share opinions, in a positive manners.
- To be supportive of and encouraging to other board members and youth.
- Upon acceptance to the SYAB, the selected youth is requested to make a verbal commitment to the board, to attend and be an active participant for their term.
- To represent all other youth who experience out-of-home care.
- Be yourself.

## **Elected Officials Requirements**

### **Chair**

- Serves one year term.
- Must serve at least one year term on the board before being considered for this position.
- Maintains order in the meeting.
- Recognizes speakers.
- Calls for votes.
- Official vote counter.
- Does not vote, unless there is a tie, then tie breaker.
- Leads interview of new members.
- Communicates with other board members as needed in between meetings, specifically contacting members that miss meetings to inquire about absence.
- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.

### **Co-Chair**

- Serves one year term.
- Assists Chair with duties as necessary.
- Fills in as Chair when Chair is absent.
- Option to take over as chair when term is up, if elected by board.
- Documents meeting discussions on flip-chart, as needed.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.

### **Scribe**

- Takes minutes.
- Prepares the meeting minutes within two weeks after the meeting.
- Types other information as needed.
- Takes attendance.
- Responsible for getting any materials needed (minutes, notes, typed materials) to the State Coordinator.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.

### **Co-Scribe**

- Fills in when Scribe is absent.
- Same duties as Scribe.
- Orientates potential members by reviewing the handbook.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.

### **Censor**

- Assists Chair in maintaining order.
- Distributes all handouts and other materials.
- Holds instructions on Robert's Rules of Order.
- Ensures that meeting starts on time.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.

### **Ex-Officio Members – (Effective September, 2002)**

- Up to three (3) non voting members per term.
- Do not have to be 21 years old to be nominated as an Ex-Officio.
- Appointed by the Division Director or Designee.
- A letter of interest must be submitted to the State Coordinator for consideration. Upon nomination by the State Coordinator, a letter will be submitted to the Division Director for approval and appointment.
- Serves no more than two (2) consecutive or non-consecutive one-year terms.
- Served at least a one-year term as a board member or alternate, within the last three (3) year.
- Must follow the same rules/guidelines as state board members.

### **Community Members**

- Dedicated individuals from the community.
- Must be invited by state board members based on topic.
- No more than three community members per meeting.
- Understands and respects the guidelines that are adopted by state board members.
- Non voting member.

## Rules

- Each member must be committed and is responsible for attending quarterly and/or other meetings as scheduled by the SYAB.
- For any SYAB approved event that a member participates in, the member will receive a stipend of \$25 per day plus reimbursement for mileage, at the state mileage rate, if the member drives himself/herself to the event.
- Health or an emergency situation shall be considered as an excused absence.
- If any SYAB member misses two (2) meetings in any one (1) year period, the SYAB will consider dismissal from the board, or a probationary period, depending upon the reason(s) for the absences. If any SYAB member misses one (1) meeting without notifying their Chafee Specialists/TLP Provider or the State Coordinator, the SYAB will issue a letter of concern to that member regarding their absences with a copy to the Chafee or TLP Specialist.
  - Probationary period defined as: The member will have no voting privileges for two consecutive meetings. To receive probation a member must provide a verified explanation to the SYAB as to why they missed the SYAB meeting(s).
- A member will be immediately removed from the board if they are adjudicated of a criminal offense.
- If the SYAB member is in Juvenile Court custody, he/she must have adult supervision while at meetings. If the youth is no longer in CD custody, he/she is not required to have supervision during overnight stays;
- If members leave the SYAB, before their term is up, they are requested to submit a formal letter of resignation to the Board or the ILP Coordinator, signed by their Chafee Specialist or TLP Provider and send an alternate. If possible, notification to the SYAB is requested prior to the last meeting attended.
- SYAB member attendance at the youth conference is mandatory and members may be ejected from the board unless the absence is considered as a medical emergency.
- Adhere to SYAB Chaperone and Youth Travel Policy.

## **Chaperone and Youth Travel Policy**

Youth involved with the SYAB program have occasion to travel to meetings, camps, conferences, etc. We are confident that a youth chosen for such privileges will exercise good judgment and avoid doing things in poor taste that would bring discredit to him or her and others. Therefore, it is understood that the following policy will be observed when traveling to and from and during youth leadership activities. If there are questions the youth should ask his/her chaperone.

The chaperone is responsible for going over the travel policy with the youth to make sure everyone understands what is expected and to periodically check with the youth to make sure things are going well. The chaperone is also responsible to make sure the youth is in his/her room when it is time to sleep.

### **Safety Issues**

- Be cautious about talking to strangers. Never give your hotel room numbers or key to anyone. If someone you don't know knocks on your room door, contact your chaperone and/or the hotel front desk to verify whether or not it is safe to open the door.
- There is no mixed company allowed in rooms at any time.
- The use of alcoholic beverages and/or recreational drugs by chaperones or youth is strictly forbidden.
- Smokeless tobacco products are not allowed during activities.
- Always stay in a group during and after activities except when you are in your room.
- Read the instructions for fire safety on the back of the door in your room. If you are of age to smoke, do so only where smoking is designated. Never smoke in bed.
- All activities during free time should be discussed with specialists/chaperone.
- Observe designated curfews. Individual curfew should be discussed with chaperone. All members must be in their rooms by midnight.
- Youth should ride to meetings/events with chaperone when possible. If member is driving self to SYAB meeting, then once the member has arrived to meeting their vehicle must be parked at meeting location and not driven again until adjournment of meeting and departure.

**Meeting/Activity Issues**

- Follow the schedule. Be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to there.
- BE ON TIME.
- Listen to presenters. Participate freely and actively.
- Ask questions.
- Be courteous of others in your group(s) at the activity. Introduce yourself to others around you when it is appropriate to do so.

**Considerations for Member Dismissal:**

If there are conduct issues during the meeting weekend, a member or member(s) will bring this to the executive team's attention. The executive team will address the issue in private and with the youth. After three occurrences over two consecutive meetings, it will be recommended that the member resign or risk being voted off of the board.

Conduct issues include but are not limited to:

- Electronic device usage during the meeting, ex.: laptops, cell phones.
- Sleeping during the meeting.
- Destruction of hotel or state property.
- Excessive side talking that is disruptive to the meeting.
- Offensive language.

\*Members will automatically be dismissed if there is a violation of the mixed company in room rule.